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Introduction

The world as we believe we know it is a web of illusions. The mind, eager for certainty, builds walls against the flow of life, and calls these walls "truth." This book is an invitation to tear them down.

At the heart of Buddhism is the perception of impermanence: everything that arises, passes away. No solid "I" inhabits this ever-renewing body, only a river of interdependent processes. To meditate is to let this reality unfold, not as theory, but as direct experience.

In the same sense, Taoism teaches that trying to master life is like punching the river: useless and painful. Water does not force its way, but reaches everywhere. Wu wei , effortless action, is not passivity, but harmony with the Dao, the hidden rhythm that moves all things. Water does not argue. It does not explain itself. It simply is: fluid, adaptable, invincible in its gentleness. It flows around stone without resistance, but in time it wears it down until it turns it into sand. It has no form of its own, but fills any container. It does not

cling, but nourishes everything it touches. Such is the mind in meditation: when the struggle ceases, it finds its natural course .

Adding complexity to the understanding of self-transformation, the provocative Nietzsche, through Zarathustra, represents a challenge to all traditions, and proclaims, not as a celebration, but as a warning: without idols to follow, humanity must create its own values. He also teaches that overcoming lies not in the denial of the world, but in its total affirmation, which accepts suffering as a necessary part of greatness. Zarathustra demonstrates that there is no wisdom without fire, that fire not only consumes, but transforms. Fire is the indomitable will that says "yes" even to suffering, that radically admits the eternal return of all things, not as resignation, but as a radical affirmation of life. While water teaches surrender, fire demands the courage to burn illusions, to face the abyss and, still, create meaning.

Chapter 1

Buddhism

Meditation

Meditation trains the mind to focus on the present, reducing internal and external distractions, and enhances the ability to aim at goals with precision. Rather than being an escape from reality, it empowers a person to navigate life's challenges with equanimity, easing the intensity of reactions, and promoting calm in the midst of turmoil.

Understanding the importance of the body in meditation is very important. Although the physical dimension can sometimes be neglected, randomly directing attention to different parts of the body has a remarkable effect on grounding the mind. This practice helps to unravel the illusion of separation between the self and the body. By focusing on the body, even randomly, we activate the networks that integrate sensation, emotion and attention. This reveals the deep connection between the physical and the mental, showing that the body is constantly renewing itself, in a dynamic and continuous flow.

More than a contemplative practice, meditation transforms the mind and body, increasing calm and clarity in responses. It strengthens the capacity for adaptation and remodeling, rebalancing internal energy and activating brain areas linked to focus and rational decisions. The practice also sharpens body and emotional awareness, reducing reactivity to stress by silencing the internal "voice" that generates wanderings and worries. In addition, it adjusts the "internal messengers" that promote well-being, while reducing those that cause excessive agitation. The benefits are vast, including the reduction of anxiety and deep sadness, improved attention and memory, greater ability to deal with stress, and decreased body tension, inducing a state of relaxation.

Several meditation techniques offer paths to awakening consciousness. Body-Focused Meditation observes bodily sensations without judgment, relieving tension and enhancing self-awareness. Deep Breathing uses the breath as an anchor to calm the internal system, revealing interconnection with the universe. Sitting Meditation, zazen , a classic practice, develops resistance to distraction and impulse control

through observation of breathing and thoughts. Standing Meditation, through stillness, activates body alignment and energy flow, improving balance and patience. Finally, Walking Meditation integrates movement and mindfulness, focusing on steps to improve coordination, reduce restlessness, increase creativity and integrate mindfulness into daily life.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is being fully anchored in the present moment, against the maze of future worries and past regrets. Through it, the mind frees itself from the habit of automatic reaction, allowing decisions to emerge from present conditions and needs. This practice cultivates a heightened awareness of one's own thoughts and feelings, without judgment, teaching one how to deal with them constructively. It develops the ability to bounce back from setbacks with greater balance, finding stability in the constant flow of existence.

Doubt and Awakening

To utter "this is true" is the tongue of fools who are stuck in their own ways. They, in their narrowness, take their way as the only truth, and so, in their ignorance, call their opponent a fool.

The search for understanding lies not in certainty, but in the radical suspension of judgment, questioning what it truly means to live. It is an invitation to move away from abstract speculation, opening our eyes to the everyday objects of the world.

Great doubt, great awakening. Little doubt, little awakening. No doubt, no awakening. The quality of the question shapes the enlightenment obtained. The depth of doubt is intrinsically linked to the breadth of understanding. Asking questions sincerely requires letting go of expectations of an answer, accepting a condition of ignorance. To sustain this immediate perplexity requires a balanced, focused and inquisitive mind, without succumbing to the pull of certainty or denial. Walking this path is like walking a tightrope: the course is in constant oscillation.

To know oneself is to consider one's own condition from multiple perspectives. This encompasses birth, aging, illness, and death, revealing the nature of life. One who truly understands knows that he has been cast into this world and is subject to falls and illnesses, and that each breath may be his last.

Understanding suffering is not sentimental but realistic: it recognizes that one continues to encounter what one dislikes, to lose what one cherishes, and to fail to obtain what one desires. Understanding embraces the totality of what happens, accepting a life permeated by both pain and pleasure, by suffering and joy.

The Illusion of Permanence and Reactivity

The common belief that things simply "are" or "are not" fails to capture the nature of reality. When we observe phenomena such as a thought, a pain, or the tree in the yard, we realize that none of these things can be reductively defined as "being" or "not being." They come and go, change and transform, slip and slide, flowing into one another. It is impossible, for example, to draw a sharp line

that marks the beginning or end of a breath. Such distinctions are useful conventions, but they are insufficient to reveal how nature really works.

Buddha described the reactivity caused by greed, hatred, and confusion as like a fire. A spark ignites the flame, and the human tendency is to believe and indulge in it, fanning the flame. Physical pain, for example, can be considered a first arrow, but mental restlessness and anguish follow like a second arrow, unnecessarily amplifying the original suffering and triggering harmful thoughts.

The cessation of reactivity can be compared to the sudden opening of a space within one's experience, a door that may have always been there but is often blocked and hidden. The more one understands the precarious and mysterious situation of life, the more egocentric reactivity dissipates or seems petty and absurd. And the more one stops believing in the dictates of compulsive mental habits, the more the world tends to reveal itself in its truth. Letting go of reactivity is a natural consequence of understanding it.

Living with understanding is a way of being, a way of moving, dealing with conflicts, perceiving

possibilities and engaging with others. It is not just about acquiring abstract knowledge about the mind or reality, but about awareness that permeates every moment, devoid of attachment, aversion and vanity.

The Void and the Nature of the "I"

To understand the emptiness of a person is to realize that the seemingly irreducible core of the "I" was never there. What one insists on calling inherently existent or intrinsically real is, in fact, that which must be denied. No matter how deeply one investigates, nothing in this world exists in a self-sufficient way, by its own intrinsic nature, or independently of everything else.

This can also be described as "non-self," indicating that unless the fiction of a fixed "self" is dispelled, appearances will remain deceptive. Every single thing in this world, from the largest elephant to the smallest subatomic particle, is contingent on proximate and distant causes, on parts to which it cannot be reduced, and on words and concepts that make it intelligible within a specific human culture.

Understanding this interconnectedness and the absence of inherent existence can lead to more skillful and effective action in life, allowing for greater flexibility and less attachment to the ego. This facilitates alignment with natural rhythms and responses, making action more fluid and engaging directly with the present moment. Embracing emptiness helps one see beyond the illusion of a rigid "self" or an unchanging world, potentially reducing internal and external conflicts.

Dwelling in the Void

When one consults the early Buddhist discourses, emptiness is not approached as an abstract negation, but as a way of inhabiting the moment. The emphasis is on direct awareness and experience of the present moment, on focusing on seeing things as they are, without the interference of conceptual thinking, preconceived notions, attachments, or desires.

This practice, often incorporated into meditation techniques, cultivates a clear and immediate experience of reality, enabling one to act naturally and effortlessly. By perceiving and responding to

reality directly, spontaneously and without distortion, actions can flow smoothly and harmoniously.

The Body as Knowledge

The famous "gut feeling" or following your intuition goes beyond a simple way of speaking. The intestine has a vast network of more than one hundred million nerve cells that work independently, directly influencing how a person feels, acts and even the decisions they make based on intuition. It is like a "second brain" in the body.

This wisdom that comes from the gut, which often seems illogical, may be linked to processes that the brain does not perceive at the time, and which receives a kind of summary of what the body has already felt and processed on a deeper level. Research shows that communication from the gut to the brain is more intense than the other way around. This changes the old idea that the mind is always in charge and the body just obeys. Often, the body already "knows" what is happening, and only later does the mind catch up with this

information, finding an explanation for the experience.

The mind tends to wander, wandering through future concerns or dwelling on the past. The body, however, is always in the here and now. Emotions, decisions, and even the most complex ideas arise from internal sensations, such as heartbeats, digestion, and muscle tension. Focusing on specific parts, such as the foot or the roof of the mouth, breaks the automatic thinking and brings attention back to the immediate, concrete experience. Treating the body as a "robot" is a habit deeply rooted in culture. The practice of noticing areas of the body that were previously neglected subverts this view, revealing the illusion of an isolated "pilot" and the integral dynamics of the organism.

The Illusion of Separation

The carbon in the human body is made from stardust, and the iron in the blood was forged in dying stars. The mind constructs a separate self, but atoms are borrowed, and memories are continually reconstructed. In general, the entire body is constantly renewing itself in a dynamic

process of continual recombination, and although some of its structures take longer to be replaced, the vast majority of its atomic components are replaced within a few years.

Every breath, every bite of food, and every sip of water is a cosmic exchange, a temporary borrowing from the universal flow. To breathe, eat, and drink is to accept the universe within oneself. To urinate, defecate, and die is to return to the cosmos what one has borrowed. These mundane acts reveal the illusion of separation and dissolve the boundaries of the body. Impermanence is natural, and transformation is inevitable.

Suffering, Acceptance and the Cosmic Perspective

Much suffering arises from the misalignment of the mind's model of self with reality: the belief in permanence, control, and separation. When one expects to be forever young and secure, panic and anxiety arise when the reality of aging or trauma sets in. Liberation comes from seeing self as a passing thought, suffering as a sign, and oneself as a verb, not a noun.

In scale, if the universe were the Earth, the galaxy of which the solar system is part would be a city, and the planet, a grain of sand. As for the trajectory of the human species, if it were represented by a 365-day calendar, writing and mathematics, considered fundamental today, only emerged in the last five days of the "year".

The Awakening of Consciousness

Truth manifests itself directly, revealing what is false and exposing the essence of being. Those who cling to illusions persist in deception and feed on pre-established concepts that are no longer valid. The experience of overcoming emerges from pain, not from ignorance. The recognition of a state of suffering can lead to a desire for liberation that, when processed, transforms into acceptance and, eventually, into a clearer perception of reality. Confrontation with one's own existence and acceptance of experiences is an indicator of integrity. The willingness to face internal and external challenges culminates in profound personal validation. Hesitation in the face of the possibility of reliving one's own life suggests an internal imbalance.

The awakening process is gradual, characterized by phases of recognition. Initially, there is the perception of pain or discomfort. Then, clarity about the situation emerges. Finally, it appears as full acceptance, devoid of guilt or the need for external validation. True overcoming does not lie in the denial of finitude, but in the deconstruction of the narratives that surround it. People's fear does not lie in the end, but in the moment of clarity in which illusions dissipate.

Emotional expression is not a weakness, but an essential component of the process of clarity, which in its purest form represents a state of full awareness. Acceptance of one's own path, without external expectations, culminates in an unshakable affirmation of one's own existence.

He who is on his way is like the dawn: still cold, but promising warmth. He does not seek crowns or shelters, he loves his burden and laughs at his fall. In every pain, he sees a seed of power. In every solitude, a fertile soil. He walks without maps, but with the direction in his chest. He creates when the world destroys him, he expresses himself even among ruins. He does not ask for forgiveness for his strength, nor permission for his joy. He knows

that everything returns, and yet he acts. He has not arrived, nor does he wish to arrive, because it is in the journey that he reveals himself who surpasses himself.

Such a person walks lightly, as if he had forgotten his own name. His eyes see without choosing, his hands touch without wanting. The world is no longer something to be conquered, it is simply what it is. He smiles at the wind, at the silence, at the stumble. Words escape, because truth no longer needs a voice. He rejects nothing, does not cling to anything. His mind is a still lake where nature rests in its entirety. He no longer wishes to leave the cycle, because he has never been outside it. He lives like bamboo: empty on the inside, firm on the outside.

Chapter 2

Taoism

Wu wei : Effortless Action

Wu wei , which translates as “non-action,” should not be confused with inaction, but rather understood as effortless action, or action in harmony with the natural flow of the world. It means operating with minimal resistance, avoiding unnecessary struggles that exhaust the will. It is about trusting the process of life, being present and aware, responding to what each moment presents, and crucially, letting go of the need to control everything. It is about acting with clear intention and serenity, which allows for intuitive and harmonious choices, resulting in a significant reduction in inner conflict and a sense of ease in living.

This practice involves moving through life like a river flowing along its course: gently, adapting to the terrain without forcing its way, finding its way around obstacles. When one stops fighting the current and starts moving with it, solutions often emerge naturally. It is not a justification for

passivity, but an invitation to take actions that align with the essence of the moment, without internal resistance.

Wu wei connects deeply with Buddhist views of emptiness. Understanding emptiness as interdependence and lack of inherent existence facilitates effortless action, as it promotes harmony with the interconnected and fluid nature of reality. By understanding that things do not have a fixed essence, it becomes easier to adapt without the need to force outcomes or resist what is. Similarly, understanding emptiness as the direct awareness of what is present also aligns with wu wei , as being directly aware of what is happening in the now allows for more spontaneous and effective action, free from the interference of mental concepts or biases.

Water

The highest form of kindness is like water. It benefits all beings effortlessly, nourishes everything without competition, settles in places that everyone avoids, and is therefore close to the Dao. Water does not compete, and therefore does

not make mistakes. It shows the nobility of the Dao by acting without forcing, by remaining where no one wants to be, by always following the lowest path. Water has no form of its own, it adapts, flows, and bypasses obstacles without resistance, which is why it is invincible and is used as a metaphor for wu wei .

In life, it is good to be close to the earth. In the mind, it is good to have empty depth like a valley. Avoiding confrontation deflects accusations, competition creates opposition. The Dao does not depend on victories, it flows with what is, without unnecessary resistance. That is why it does not make mistakes, because it does not seek to dominate.

One of the central symbols of the Dao is the void that receives everything. The valley is receptive, silent, open. This is how the mind should be: not full of opinions or fixed identity, but capable of perceiving and accepting. The Dao acts without forcing, transforms without conflict.

When You Bend, Everything Fits

To bend is not to break. When you give in, everything falls into place. What is lowered becomes full. Emptiness becomes full. Weariness gives way to regeneration. Loss becomes gain. In little there is contentment , and in much, confusion. Simplicity and moderation are the heart of practice. Excess unbalances. The little, the essential, reveals the natural order. The Dao is the path of the minimum necessary.

The weak who yields are stronger than the strong who breaks. Winning by not fighting is the logic of the Dao. It is not about weakness, but about a strength that transcends conflict and thus becomes absolute. The Dao is in someone who does not show off, and therefore enlightens. He does not promote himself, and therefore becomes an example. He does not impose himself, and therefore achieves. He does not place himself above, and therefore leads. He does not dispute with anyone, and therefore no one disputes with him. This is the Dao in action: authority without domination, achievement without assertion.

The Dao is in those who, without arrogance, distinguish right from wrong. Without praising

themselves, honor finds them. Without seeking a legacy, they leave something lasting. By giving up their self-image, they reveal who they are. By ceasing to exalt themselves, they remain. By renouncing dispute, they become unbeatable. The fluidity of opposites and continuous transformation reveal the non-duality of the Dao.

The Path of Aging

The way we age is profoundly influenced by our attitude towards life. When we live with autonomy and openness to change, aging manifests itself as a continuous process of self-discovery and evolution, with greater preservation of strength and vitality, both physical and mental.

On the other hand, passivity and conformism lead to stagnation and inertia, resulting in greater rigidity and accelerated decline. The inability to embody the fluidity needed to overcome the challenges of time is fully connected to these difficulties. An active stance promotes flexibility and a continuous purpose, generating a sense of accomplishment and acceptance of the changes inherent in life. Resistance to adaptation, on the

other hand, results in frustration, isolation, and loss of purpose, and in an earlier general decline.

Chapter 3

Emotions

Emotions as Vital Signs

The act of feeling, of allowing emotions to reveal themselves, without masks or forced adaptations, often mistaken for fragility, can be the purest manifestation of courage. Emotions are not adversaries, but vital signs, and understanding them brings freedom and strength. Feeling is not a matter of control, but of understanding and processing. By accepting emotions, one assumes autonomy, and thus emotions do not dominate, but inform. Feeling is an act of responsibility, because by recognizing emotions, one can take control of one's own transformation process.

When we are taught to suppress emotions, with phrases like “be strong,” “don’t cry,” or “don’t complain,” the lesson is actually to deny our own reality. This is not discipline; it is self-betrayal . True emotional discipline does not lie in repression, but in the ability to discern emotions, recognize their impact, and choose how to react consciously.

Genuine discipline allows us to feel without being swept away by excess or denial.

Emotions should not simply be silenced or ignored. They warn, teach, and if properly understood, can guide us toward a more balanced and truthful state. However, this requires constant effort, patience, and a commitment to not run away and to act with integrity.

The adaptations forged throughout life to navigate adversity should not be denied, but acknowledged. Each defense, each "role" assumed, served the purpose of survival. The process of integration does not cancel out what has gone before, but harmonizes the past with the present under construction.

The body stores the emotional memory of all experiences, reflecting pain, fear, and sadness in ways that verbalization often fails to capture. However, it is the mind that needs to process and assign meaning to this pain so that it can be resolved. Ignoring bodily sensations is neglecting powerful signals that something requires attention. It is not about fighting what you feel, but about observing with courage, without rushing to “fix” it,

and understanding that each sensation carries an essential message.

It is essential to recognize the right to feel, without falling into the traps of destructiveness or imbalance. This means being angry without being destructive, sad without sinking into pain, and fearful without losing your way. Feeling these emotions is not a sign of weakness; on the contrary, it is the essence of being genuine.

Emotions as Energy of Transformation

Emotions are not entities to be subdued, but intrinsic forces that drive. The belief that they must be controlled obscures their true nature—that they are invitations to reflection, questioning, and true action, that they are guides to a richer, truer existence. When misunderstood, however, they become distorted and distract from deeper personal purposes.

Anger signals a violation, a boundary that has been violated. In its highest form, it mobilizes the search for justice and the restoration of balance. This energy is not limited to destruction; it can forge significant social change or catalyze internal

transformation. However, when devoid of understanding, anger degenerates into mere reactivity, erupting into aggression or internalizing as resentment. Such deviation not only erodes relationships, but also the health of the mind and body. The path to processing anger lies in recognition and reflection. Rather than an impulsive reaction, it requires assertive communication, in which frustration is expressed without attacking the person. Anger, understood in this way, is transmuted into a motivating force for constructive action.

Sadness is the guardian of mourning and acceptance of loss. It is the connection to essential vulnerability, allowing reflection on what was valuable and the redefinition of what is to come. Sincere crying purifies and opens space for new ways of loving and living. When avoided or prolonged, sadness can become chronic suffering. The imposition of not showing weakness prevents the pain from being fully experienced, generating emotional blocks. To process it wisely , it is necessary to allow the pain, express it in safe environments, and seek social connections. Sadness, then, reveals itself as a necessary path to

healing and acceptance, enabling the resumption of life with greater depth.

Fear is an adaptive emotion, a warning sign of danger. It activates the ability to deal with challenges and maintains vigilance. However, fear can become distorted when it is based on imaginary scenarios or past traumas. In these cases, it paralyzes, preventing the exploration of enriching experiences, distancing someone from their potential. For healthy processing, it is essential to identify its origin and question its validity. Fear is not a sign of weakness, but an indication of the capacity to evolve and grow. By facing it with courage, insecurity can be transformed into an opportunity for learning.

Desire is a vital energy that drives growth, connection, and the fulfillment of purpose. It transcends mere material pursuits and is a force that directs us toward what truly matters. However, society often diverts authentic desire to focus on superficial aspirations, such as the pursuit of status or immediate gratification. Such desires do not fulfill us deeply and often treat others as objects, seeking validation or momentary satisfaction from them. Desire must be processed with self-

awareness. The fundamental question is: “Does this desire truly resonate with my essence or is it a response to external pressures?” Reflection allows us to align desire with true growth.

Shame arises when there is a perceived risk of rejection or disconnection. It reminds us of social norms and group expectations. The underlying question is, “Am I still worthy of connection if I allow myself to be vulnerable and imperfect?” When internalized excessively, shame can trap us in a relentless pursuit of perfection and external approval. This cycle distances us from our true identity and prevents us from establishing genuine connections. Shame must be processed with self-compassion and authenticity. It is imperative to recognize its roots, questioning whether they stem from external expectations or limiting beliefs about who we are. Sharing vulnerability in safe environments helps to dissolve the burden of shame, allowing us to embrace our humanity and interact openly with others.

In the complexity of human emotional experience, each emotion has a vital function and, at the same time, a potential for deviation. We must therefore promote the healthy processing of these

emotions, using them as tools for a more authentic, balanced and transformative life. It is not about running away from them or trying to control them rigidly, but about understanding their value and directing them towards our own and collective well-being. No emotion is "bad". What defines its impact is what we do with it. Ignoring anger turns it into resentment; stifling sadness turns it into apathy; fearing fear makes it grow. The way forward is to accept, understand and redirect.

Chapter 4

Zarathustra

The Fire: The Courage of Self-Transformation

In stark contrast to the abyss, fire represents the force that drives people to transcend limitations, to find meaning in the midst of chaos, and to assert their will in the face of suffering. Fire is what keeps us alive, what drives us to grow, to create, and to transform. It is the energy that fuels the quest for self-improvement, the burning desire to become more than we are, to forge new values in a world devoid of intrinsic meaning.

This fire, however, is not an easy force to control. It demands constant attention, continuous effort, and the courage to face the abyss head on. One must acknowledge one's fears, doubts, and uncertainties, transforming them into fuel for one's own growth. To keep the fire burning, one must continually fight against the pull of the abyss, resisting the temptation to succumb to the comforts of numbness and apathy. One must embrace the hardship, pain, and confusion of life, knowing that

it is only through this struggle that we can forge something truly meaningful.

The belief that life is ultimately meaningless and worthless presents itself as a seductive force. It offers a seeming escape from the pain of existence, suggesting that nothing really matters. The abyss, in its purest form, can be a bottomless pit that swallows up all meaning and makes existence an exercise in futility. In moments of despair, it may seem easier to surrender to it than to continue the struggle against the inevitable suffering that accompanies life. It seduces as a freedom from the burden of meaning, but this freedom is hollow. It is a passive freedom, one that leads to stagnation, to the extinguishing of the fire.

The danger lies in the intellectual and existential paralysis that the abyss causes. If everything is meaningless, what is the purpose of any effort? Why fight against it, why persist in the battle against suffering? In a world dominated by this thinking, the fire withers. The energy of overcoming oneself, the drive to transcend one's own limitations, is replaced by an acceptance of passivity, a retreat into apathy.

Yet this path is not inevitable. It is a choice, a way of responding to the abyss. It arises when we fail to engage with the complexity of existence, when we avoid confronting the contradictions and uncertainties that define the human condition. It is the result of avoiding the fire, of rejecting the struggle, of choosing comfort over growth. It is the ultimate consequence of denying the abyss and choosing to numb ourselves to its presence.

Ultimately, life is not about escaping the abyss, but about learning to live with it, to transform it into something that strengthens the will. The abyss and the fire are not opposing forces, but complementary ones. They are two sides of the same coin, and without one, the other would cease to exist. Living authentically is accepting both, moving with both, and using them as raw material for the ongoing process of overcoming oneself.

Life, in its truest form, is a constant struggle, a continual confrontation with the abyss and a tireless effort to keep the fire alive. It is in this struggle, in this dynamic tension between suffering and transformation, that meaning is forged. Surrendering to the abyss may offer a tempting escape, but it ultimately leads to the extinguishing

of the fire. In contrast, active engagement with the abyss, the willingness to confront suffering and uncertainty, leads to the creation of something authentic, something vital. We must remember that the abyss is not our enemy. It is, paradoxically, the source of our greatest strength. And the fire, though difficult to maintain, is the key to our survival.

The Living Truth: Zarathustra and Spiritual Autonomy

Knowing the truth, in Zarathustra's view, transcends mere factual accuracy. It is having traversed the illusions that sustain life and yet choosing the truth with open eyes. Those who "cannot lie" have not passed this ordeal; their honesty is cold, involuntary, and sterile, devoid of the vital complexity that truth demands. Zarathustra understands that falsehood is woven into the roots of life, into myth, art, hope, and love. Dreams come before awakening, stories before philosophizing.

Every great truth must pass through stages of deception, even self-deception, before it becomes

more than a sterile fact, before it becomes something to be suffered and lived by. He who can lie but chooses to tell the truth does so out of strength, not weakness, for he knows the protective power of illusion, the nourishment that myth offers the mind, and yet he consciously chooses to affirm the world as it is.

Zen and Zarathustra: Paths to Enlightenment

The Zen master, representing a branch of Buddhism, seeks the direct experience of impermanent reality, aiming to dissolve the ego in the present moment, without attachments to legacies or final victories. In contrast, Zarathustra calls for human self-improvement, the creation of one's own values that transcend herd morality, affirming life in all its contradictions.

Zarathustra’s approach is an unceasing combat against the false, transforming knowledge into a war that burns away illusions. The Zen master, in contrast, sees knowledge as water, fluid and adaptable, able to see through things without resistance or the need to destroy. Both positions, however, carry their dangers: Zen can lead to

disappearing into the absolute, floating above history, and Zarathustra can drown in intensity, endlessly yearning for self-improvement without rest or companionship.

The quest for enlightenment in both Zen and Zarathustra transcends the limitations of the self into a more authentic existence, though one seeks stillness and the other active engagement. Zen stillness, if left unmoderated, can lead to a withdrawal from the world and its injustices, running the risk of passivity. Zen "non-action," when rigid, can be complicit in preserving things as they are, ignoring the suffering generated by humanity's systems and structures, and failing to confront the true needs of the world. Zarathustra criticizes this passivity, arguing that enlightenment should not be an escape but an active engagement with life, allowing the will to be the creative force that shapes meaning amidst disorder.

The main tension lies in facing the fact that neutrality in a morally compromised system is not a virtue, but rather complicity. Not acting or remaining silent reinforces the status quo, transforming inaction into silent violence. Stagnation in institutions can be intentional,

creating a vacuum that benefits the interests of a few and harms the majority. Someone who merely complies with the minimum is a reflection of this larger system, mirroring its disinterest. In this context, maintaining integrity becomes a continuous act of resistance against moral erosion and the temptation to conform.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that in any organization, the pursuit of results often gives way to the enhancement of image and self-preservation, that individual success depends more on blind loyalty than on competence, requiring the suppression of personal values. Integrity, seen as a risk, marginalizes those who question the system through exclusion and overload, not through direct confrontation. The "sale of the soul" is rarely explicit, manifesting itself in small concessions and strategic silences that shape character. In corrupt environments, truth is devalued, and cynicism emerges as a survival tool, normalizing corruption by gradually accustoming members to the belief that it is necessary to "play the game" to have influence.

Zarathustra, on the other hand, teaches that enlightenment is not a state of static peace, but

rather the constant self-overcoming that affirms one's place in a world of uncertainty. Will, for Zarathustra, is the inner drive to grow and create, actively shaping existence rather than passively accepting it, as a restricted interpretation of Zen might propose. In this sense, suffering is not something to be avoided, but a vehicle for growth. Zarathustra points to the challenge of accepting life in its pain and complexity, and that it is possible to desire and affirm the eternal return of everything. Passivity is ineffective in the face of uncontrollable violence; Zarathustra would demand resistance and an active rejection of evil.

The world needs an enlightenment that combines inner stillness with outer engagement, in a dynamic balance that challenges injustice and creates a better future through conscious action. This requires one to not only engage with one's inner world, but to confront the outer, balancing stillness and action, self and other, nonviolence and judgment.

Chapter 5

Fables

The Path of Emptiness

This story reveals the journey of a man in search of a way to live authentically, beginning his reflection from what is close at hand. He observes the village in which he resides, noting that, although empty of elephants, cattle and horses, gold and silver, multitudes of women and men, it contains only one thing of which it is not empty: a group of people. However, considering the noisy community, he seeks refuge in the forest, which he perceives as empty of any awareness of villages or people.

Thus he regards the forest as empty of what is not there, recognizing what resides there: this is what is here. Although the hustle and bustle of the world no longer disturbs him, anxiety persists in his new solitude. To overcome it, he immerses himself in progressively more refined meditative states: the expanse of the Earth, limitless space and awareness, nothingness, and the state of neither being aware nor unaware.

At each stage, however, he discovers that something within himself still creates discomfort. He abandons the deep states for a concentration without signs of the heart. Even so, he realizes that he is still prone to the anxiety that comes from having the sensory fields of a human body. He understands that, despite his abilities, his concentration is compounded and artificial, and is therefore impermanent and subject to cessation.

It is only at this point, having exhausted the possibilities of solitary meditation in the forest, that he realizes the futility of all these exercises, for they will inevitably come to an end. Having come full circle, this awareness of impermanence grants him the peace of mind he has been seeking. Knowing and seeing in this way, his heart is freed from the effluences of desire, being, and ignorance. But the story does not end there. He then reflects: without any of the anxieties due to these effluences, I am still prone to the anxiety that comes from having the senses of a body. This state of consciousness is empty of these effluences. What is not empty is this: the sensory fields of a living body.

The text concludes with the profound insight that to dwell in emptiness means to inhabit fully the space of sensory experience, but in a way that is no longer determined by habitual reactivity. Dwelling in this emptiness does not nullify suffering, but transforms the relationship to it. The point is not merely to understand emptiness, but to dwell in it. This practice brings one firmly back into the body, allowing one to open one's eyes and see ordinary things as if for the first time. As the Buddha instructed, to live in this way means that in the seen there will be only the seen ; in the heard, only the heard; in the sense, only the sense; in what I am aware of, only what I am aware of.

The Five-Armed Prince and the Inner Strength

A certain prince, after becoming the best disciple of a renowned master, was given five weapons as a prize. On his journey back home, he came across a forest haunted by a fearsome monster known as the Sticky-Hair. The villagers, in their wisdom, warned Prince Five-Arms: "Do not go into the forest. There is a monstrous demon called the Sticky-Hair living there. He kills everyone he sees!"

But the prince, with the self-confidence and fearlessness of a tiger, went on. In the forest he met the creature, as tall as a tree and of repulsive appearance. The monster roared: "Where are you going in my forest, little man? You look like a tasty morsel to me. I will devour you!" The prince, in his presumption of knowing and being all-powerful, replied: "Fierce demon, I am Prince Five-Arms, and I have come to meet you on purpose. I dare you to attack me! I will kill you easily with my first two weapons: my bow with poisoned arrows."

He fired an arrow, which merely stuck in the monster's hair, causing no damage. Fifty more arrows followed suit, falling harmlessly to the ground. Then the prince drew his sword, then his spear, and finally his club, but they all caught in the creature's sticky fur.

Then the prince said, "Have you never heard of me, Prince Five-Arms? I have more than just my five weapons. I have the strength of my body. I will break you into pieces!" He threw a punch with his right fist, but his hand stuck. So did his left fist. He kicked with his feet, but they too stuck. Finally, he struck with his head, which also stuck.

Tied to the monster at five points, the prince, however, showed no fear. Sticky-Hair thought, "This is very strange. He is more like a lion than a man. Even in the claws of a ferocious monster like me, he does not tremble. In all the time I have been killing people in this forest, I have never met anyone so great. Why is he not afraid of me?"

Because Prince Five-Armed was not like ordinary men, Sticky-Hair hesitated to devour him. Instead, he asked, “Why are you not afraid of death?” The prince replied, “Why should I be afraid of death? There is no doubt that anyone who is born will definitely die!” And in that instant, he understood, “The five weapons given to me by the great master were useless. Even the strength of my body was useless. I must go beyond the teachings, beyond my body, to the weapon within my mind , the only weapon I need.”

The prince continued, "There is one small detail I haven't told you yet. In my belly is my secret weapon, a diamond weapon that you cannot digest. It will cut your intestines into pieces if you are foolish enough to swallow me. So if I die, you die! That is why I am not afraid of you!" In this way, the prince used his greatest inner strength in a way

that Sticky-Hair could understand. He knew that this greatest of all weapons, the one inside his mind, was the precious diamond of his own intelligence.

The creature mused, "Without a doubt, this fearless man is telling the truth. Even if I eat a pea-sized piece of such a hero, I will not be able to digest it. So I will let him go." Fearing his own death, he released Prince Five-Arms. The monster said, "You are a great man. I will not eat your flesh. I let you go free, just as the moon reappears after an eclipse, so that you may shine pleasantly on all your friends and relatives."

The prince learned from his battle with Sticky-Hair that the only weapon truly worth using is inner intelligence, not the weapons of the outside world. And with this diamond weapon, he also knew that destroying life brings only suffering to the killer. In gratitude, he taught the unfortunate demon: "You have become a blood-sucking, flesh-eating demon because of harmful deeds in your past. You can only go from darkness to darkness." And further: "Now that you have spared me, you will not be able to kill so easily. Keep this in mind: destroying life leads to grief!"

Prince Five-Armed continued to instruct the monster, and in time the creature agreed to follow the Five Steps of Training. In his own way, Sticky-Hair was transformed into a friendly forest fairy. And when the prince left the forest, he told the people of the change in the former demon, who from then on fed the creature regularly and lived with it in peace.

The River and the Barriers

There was a wide, silent river that crossed the mountains and watered the valleys. It was not a noisy river, nor did it rush. It just flowed steadily and serenely, carving the earth with its constancy. Wherever it went, it made forests grow, turned mill wheels, and fed villages.

But one day, as he passed through a new village, he met nervous, vain men who were uncomfortable with the river. They did not understand its fluidity, its effortless strength, its uselessness. They felt small before it, and this angered them. So they began to build barriers. Small stone dams, mud fences, iron railings.

The river, upon encountering the first barrier, did not become enraged. It did not retreat. Nor did it argue with the men. It simply stopped for a moment and watched. Then, calmly, it began to infiltrate through the cracks. Where there was a gap, it passed through. Where there was soft ground, it dug through. Where there was resistance, it gathered strength until it overflowed.

And when he couldn't get through, he changed course. He took another path. He didn't complain. He created a new riverbed. Further down, the new course began to feed other fields , more fertile, more open, less petty.

The men of the village finally had their fences and dikes dried up. They tried to accuse the river of running away, of being ungrateful. But they soon realized that it was their own thirst that they had caused, by trying to control that which cannot be possessed.

Moral:

The strong do not fight the mud, they go around it.

The creator does not prove anything, he transforms.

Excellence does not require recognition, it flourishes where it finds space.

And if you don't find it, create a new world where you can run free.

In Passage: Zarathustra and the City of Contempt

Once upon a time, a wanderer known as Zarathustra, after a long journey, found himself back at the gates of a great city. As he approached, a noisy fool, known for imitating his mannerisms and words, jumped out in front of him. "O Zarathustra," the fool cried unpleasantly, with outstretched hands, "this city is a swamp for thoughts. Here great ideas boil to death, and the deepest feelings rot. Do you not smell the slaughterhouses of the spirit? Souls hanging like rags, turning into filthy newspapers! They jostle about aimlessly, jingle their gold, and are cold within, seeking warmth in vices, addicted to the opinions of others. There is a false virtue, skilled in

flattery, seeking 'little stars in the bosom' to please princes and shopkeepers. Spit on this city of merchants and turn away!"

The fool went on talking and made a long speech. At last, however, Zarathustra, impatient, interrupted the fool and silenced him. "Enough!" he cried. "Your words and your ways have long disgusted me. Why have you stayed so long in this swamp that you have become a frog? Why have you not gone to the forest? Is not the sea full of green islands?"

"I despise your contempt," he continued. "You angry fool, I call you a grumbling pig, for your whining comes from hurt, not from love. Even if my words were a hundred times right, you would use them for evil, for your heart is one of revenge."

Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he gazed at the great city, sighed and remained silent for a long time. Finally he said: "It is not only this fool, but also this great city that disgusts me. Nothing here can be improved or worsened. Woe to this great city! May it be consumed by a pillar of fire!"

And as a farewell, he gave the fool this lesson: "Where one can no longer love, one must – pass by!"